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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 004124

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SUBJECT: COR SPEAKER AND VICE PRESIDENT ADVISER HANNAH
DISCUSS SECURITY SITUATION

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Robert Gilchrist for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashadani told John Hannah, the National Security Adviser to the Vice President, October 18 that there is a security challenge in Iraq caused by Sunni and Shi'a militias. He estimated that there is a six month period to overcome the security situation before chaos erupts. The Speaker stated that the Ministers of Defense and Interior should be strong. He mentioned that, during government formation negotiations, he had recommended National Dialogue Front leader Khalaf Allayan for MOD and Badr Organization head Hadi al-Amiri for MOI. He said Allayan could effectively deal with the Sunnis and eliminate the terrorist threat and al-Amiri could deal with the Shi'a and eliminate the militia threat. He added that Iraqis are losing faith and trust in Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) but they are trusting MNF-I more and more. He said both militants and Baathists are changing views and looking at neighboring countries (like Iran) as the enemy. Mashadani stated that the Baathists are ready to talk with the U.S. They do not want control, the Speaker claimed, they just want to be part of the government. Mashadani insisted that Iraq must not be governed by Islamists (like himself) but by secular parties, of which the Baath was the strongest and most capable. END SUMMARY.

Limited Time Period to Deal with Security Situation

12. (C) CoR Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashadani told John Hannah, the National Security Adviser to the Vice President, October 18 that there is a security challenge in Iraq caused by Sunni and Shi'a militias. He

warned that, if the GOI cannot stop these militias as well as some of the extreme Kurds, the entire structure of the state will be in danger. The Speaker added that, given Iraq's wealth of resources and human capital, it could be a model for the whole region. However, he estimated that there is a six month period to overcome the security situation and ease the suffering of the people before chaos erupts. He said this chaos will spare neither Iraq's neighbors nor far-away countries like the U.S. He said the U.S. is responsible for rebuilding Iraq politically and putting it on a path to democracy.

13. (C) The Speaker told Mr. Hannah that, if he were the United Nations (UN), he would

-- Push the GOI to stop and face ("declare war on") Sunni and Shi'a militias.

-- Slow the pace of Arab federalism in Iraq (but not the Kurdish region). Mashadani stated that if there are 2-3 Arab regions in Iraq, the western region will be under the control of the Takfiris and the south under Iranian intelligence. The western region under a Taliban-like regime would be a continuous threat to Iraq's neighbors,

BAGHDAD 00004124 002 OF 003

who would interfere in Iraq's internal affairs, and Iraq would never be stable.

-- Start and strongly rebuild the country.

Sunni Arabs in Iraq and the Structure of Security Ministries

14. (C) Mashadani said Sunni Arabs need to have political rights equal to their numbers and need to have security. MNF-I and the terrorists fight on their lands, and many Sunni Arabs have been killed or in prison, while others have been forced to leave their homes and flee to neighbors. He added that militias have infiltrated the security organizations, and the sectarian balance is not right. As a result, Sunni Arabs feel they are being attacked by militias under cover of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). As Sunni politicians, they hoped to end this suffering, but "we can do nothing. The government is weak." They are in a real dilemma because of pressure from the Sunni Arab "street" to do something.

15. (C) The Speaker said the Ministers of Defense and Interior should be strong. He mentioned that, during government formation negotiations, he had recommended National Dialogue Front leader Khalaf Allayan for MOD and Badr Organization head Hadi al-Amiri for MOI. He

said Allayan could effectively deal with the Sunnis and eliminate the terrorist threat and al-Amiri could deal with the Shi'a and eliminate the militia threat. He explained that if you pick a strong Sunni like Allayan for MOD and charge him with cleaning Sunni areas, he cannot say "I can't" (and the same applies to MOI and Shi'a areas). He added that, when a minister is tough on his own sect, there cannot be charges of sectarianism. As for the Minister of State for National Security Affairs, it should be occupied by a secular, professional, neutral person who can monitor the security ministries and not allow them to turn into militias. In addition, the Sunni Deputy President would monitor MOI, and the Shi'a Deputy President would monitor MOD.

16. (C) Mashadani raised another option of the National Salvation (or Martial Law) Government that would be security in nature and would just control the security situation. According to the Speaker, such a government would be better than the current one. For the democratic process to succeed, he stressed the MNF-I must re-occupy Baghdad. If Baghdad was under MNF-I control, then MOI and MOD could deal with other parties (e.g., terrorists, insurgents). He said Iraqis are losing faith and trust in Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) but they are trusting MNF-I more and more. He added that many militant groups are also changing their views of MNF-I and that this needs to be taken advantage of by stopping assassinations and forced displacements.

Baathists Ready to Talk with U.S.

BAGHDAD 00004124 003 OF 003

17. (C) Another sign of this political change is the Baathists, who were one of the worst enemies because of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. They are also changing views and looking at neighboring countries (like Iran) as the enemy. Mashadani stated that the Baathists are ready to talk with the U.S. They do not want control, the Speaker claimed, they just want to be part of the government. Iraq cannot be ruled by religious extremists ("like myself") because sectarianism will always be there. Iraq needs secular government and it needs secular political parties. The U.S. should help secular parties, and the Baath is the strongest. Other secular parties are too weak to remove the religious extremists. Only the Baath party can, he concluded.

18. (C) Mr. Hannah reaffirmed USG support for the current government and for Prime Minister Maliki. Mr. Hannah then asked why the

level of violence has not decreased since the Sunni Arabs joined the government. Mashadani replied that it is not true that the Sunni political leaders have one foot in the political process and one foot out. The Sunni Arabs only demanded total control of MOD to ensure that they can protect the militants if they drop their weapons. He added that they cannot ask militants to lay down their arms because they cannot protect them afterwards. He added that the militants are afraid to drop their weapons. He stated that, since the Sunni Arab politicians do not ask the militants to lay down their arms, they are told they have one foot in the resistance and one foot in the government. He described the Sunni representation, including himself, in government as weak.

19. (U) This cable was cleared by OVPNSA John Hannah.
KHALILZAD